

New Hampshire Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program Accepting Grant Applications for the Merrimack River Watershed

The New Hampshire Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program at the Department of Environmental Services is currently accepting grant applications for funding of aquatic resource mitigation projects within the Merrimack River Watershed. In 2007, DES adopted rules establishing the Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund, which provides an in-lieu fee payment alternative for permit applicants to consider when striving to meet state and federal wetland mitigation requirements. Payments are deposited into 16 watershed accounts which then can be used for aquatic resource restoration projects or to permanently protect wetlands with high conservation value.

The Merrimack River Watershed will be the first of the 16 watershed ARM Fund accounts to be ready for release. As these funds are tied to wetland mitigation requirements, the proposal ranking criteria will favor those projects that restore and permanently protect the functions and values of aquatic resources that were lost within the watershed during the grant cycle. The primary functions lost include wildlife habitat, groundwater discharge and recharge, flood storage, and sediment/toxicant retention.

Up to **\$650,000** is available through the ARM Fund for eligible projects within the Merrimack River Watershed.

Grant Application Information

Application Submission Deadline – Two copies of the completed application and all associated documentation are due at the DES Wetlands Bureau office (address below) no later than 4:00 p.m. on June 5, 2009. The application form with instructions is available on the Wetlands Bureau web site at www.des.nh.gov. Once on the DES homepage, click on the A-Z list on the upper right hand corner of the screen and scroll down to “Wetlands Bureau,” and find “Mitigation” under Related Programs (<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/wmp/index.htm>).

Eligible Applicants –Any of New Hampshire's communities wholly or partially located within the Merrimack River watershed (a watershed map is available at: http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/wmp/documents/merrimack_watershed_map.pdf), governmental entities in Merrimack County, Regional Planning Commissions, County Conservation Districts, Watershed/River Associations, state agencies, departments within the University of New Hampshire and other institutions of higher education, community public school districts, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply.

Eligible Projects/Activities – Grants are offered for activities that restore or protect aquatic resources, including but not limited to the following:

- 1) Development of final wetland restoration or creation plans;
- 2) Construction costs for wetland restoration or creation such as site clearing and excavation, construction management, consulting fees, permit costs, wetland grading and soil augmentation, disposal costs of excavated materials, planting, and monitoring and maintenance of wetland restoration or creation sites to reduce risk of failure;
- 3) Acquisition of land or conservation easements that help protect high conservation value wetlands in perpetuity and associated costs including property surveys, appraisals, legal costs,

- closing costs, and subdivision fees;
- 4) Acquisition of conservation interests after a qualified grantee has been identified;
 - 5) Stewardship of a conservation interest; and
 - 6) Other aquatic resource improvement or protection projects, such as water quality improvement projects, tidal wetland restoration projects, dam removal projects, stream or river restoration projects, or activities that provide habitat improvement including culvert replacement or removal.

This list is not exhaustive so check the evaluation criteria contained in the application packet to see if your project is eligible. The evaluation criteria used to rank the applications can also be found in the DES rules at Env-Wt 807.17 and 807.18 in Env-Wt 100-800, available at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/legal/rules/index.htm#wetlands>

Geographic Requirement – Projects must take place within the boundaries of the Merrimack River Hydrologic Unit Code 8 (HUC 8) watershed (see map at http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/wmp/documents/merrimack_watershed_map.pdf)

Matching Requirements – ARM program funds could cover complete or partial funding for all project costs. The state funds do not need to be matched by other sources but an application may score additional points if a match is secured. Match sources can include donated funds, donated municipal staff time, volunteer time, and donated materials. The match must be secure in order to score additional points through the evaluation criteria.

Submit one hard copy and one CD with the application materials in a pdf format to:

NH Department of Environmental Services
ATTN: Lori Sommer
Wetlands Bureau
29 Hazen Drive
PO Box 95
Concord, NH 03302-0095

For Further Assistance - Lori Sommer, Mitigation Coordinator, at (603) 271-4059, or lori.sommer@des.nh.gov.